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Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 10 October 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Shikongo (Vice-Chair) ..... (Namibia)

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In the absence of Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Chair, Ms. Shikongo (Namibia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 70: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/73/41, A/73/174, A/73/257, A/73/265, A/73/272, A/73/276, A/73/278)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/73/223))

1. **Ms. al-Mudayhim** (Saudi Arabia) said that said that her country strove to uphold the rights of all children without regard to their ethnicity, colour or religion. Since 2014, more than 13,000 teachers and others working in the education sector had taken part in training courses to help them identify and intervene promptly in cases of child abuse or neglect. Saudi Arabia had also established a committee to study the negative impact on children of video games, established age restrictions for films and video games in order to protect children, and adopted legislation to uphold public decency and morality on the Internet and combat its use for criminal purposes. The National Family Safety Programme had established a centralized online database that contained detailed information on all cases of child abuse and neglect in Saudi Arabia to facilitate efforts to combat it. There was also a 24-hour hotline for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect, and all suspected cases were referred to the competent authorities so that appropriate action could be taken. The Programme was also seeking to combat bullying in schools, inter alia, by providing training to student counsellors so that they could help raise awareness among children of the dangers of bullying and how they should respond to it.

2. Saudi Arabia provided humanitarian assistance to children worldwide and had provided more than $260 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre had also provided more than $36 million to combat the cholera epidemic in Yemen and was implementing numerous projects for children in that country, including a project to rehabilitate children forcibly conscripted into Houthi movement militias and facilitate their reintegration into the education system. Furthermore, Syrian and Yemeni children residing in Saudi Arabia were entitled to free education and health-care services. Saudi Arabia would continue to cooperate with the United Nations, the international community and all other relevant stakeholders in the area of children's rights.

3. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that, despite the progress made to protect children against discrimination and inequality, if the prevailing international economic order persisted, by 2030, 167 million children would live in extreme poverty, 69 million children would die of curable diseases and 60 million children would be deprived of education. Cuba had created inter-sectoral national policies and programmes in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which spanned the areas of health, education, disability, and sports and culture. Cuba had received recognition from United Nations agencies, funds and programmes for its work on child and adolescent development, which had been a national priority since the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Of note were the country's network of shelters for homeless children and, in the first half of 2018, the achievement of its lowest recorded infant mortality rates. Cuba was also the first country to have eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis, as confirmed by the World Health Organization.

4. Such successes were the product of Cuba's universal and free health, education and social welfare systems, to which the Parliament dedicated half of the national budget. That was despite the serious impact of the economic, financial and commercial embargo imposed on the Cuban people by the United States of America for over half a century, which had a particularly harmful effect on the country's children. The worst form of violence against children was to deny them the right to life, health, food, education, culture and a safe world.

5. **Ms. Miyazaki** (Japan) said that her country's commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16, Target 2, and addressing violence against children was embodied in its strong support for the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. Japan was one of its pathfinding countries, which had committed to accelerating national actions to end violence against children. Her Government had also joined the Board of the Partnership and was the first to donate to the Partnership initiative to prevent violence in humanitarian settings, contributing $5.9 million to support 12 projects in conflict settings in Nigeria and Uganda. Those projects sought to enable children to leave armed groups; provide vocational training and psychological support; and prevent children from experiencing further harm from land mines.

6. At the national level measures had been taken to monitor bullying and violence against children and protect them from those practices. In particular, the Government published an annual survey documenting

the number of recognized cases of bullying, including cyberbullying, and since 2015, it had held a national summit with the aim of promoting diverse and creative efforts to address the issue of bullying across the country. Japan had also established a 24-hour hotline for primary and secondary school students to seek help and guidance on the issue.

7. **Mr. Tenya** (Peru) said that his delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendations to increase national, regional and international efforts to eradicate child, early and forced marriage, which violated the rights of girls. Peru had recently demonstrated its commitment to implementing the Convention at the international level by signing the Safe Schools Declaration, through which States expressed political support for the continuance of education and the protection of students, teachers and schools during armed conflict. Peru had also joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and a United Kingdom-led initiative to support education for girls.

8. At the national level, Peru was implementing a national actional plan for children which set out goals and guidelines for each State sector. A key objective under the general State plan was to reduce anaemia rates in children aged 6 to 35 months and ensure the protection of children from violence. The Ministry of Education had launched a programme to enable anyone, including children themselves, to report incidents of violence in school, and was working to ensure girls' equal access to education, in particular their timely school enrolment and continued attendance. The Government was also implementing a national strategy to eradicate child labour and remained committed to the monitoring and implementation of national policies on the promotion and protection of children's rights. The protection of the rights of the most vulnerable, including children with disabilities and child refugees, should remain a priority.

9. **Mr. Lafta** (Iraq) said that Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had committed grave violations of the rights of children in his country, particularly following its seizure of Mosul in June 2014. The Iraqi Government was working closely with a number of international organizations to protect all children from terrorism and violence. It had adopted a comprehensive national policy on the protection of children, including children in liberated areas, and was seeking to raise public awareness of children's rights and the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. His Government had established a children's parliament to encourage children to express their opinions and facilitate their full involvement in public life. It was striving to ensure that all children in Iraq received a high-quality education and was strengthening social safety nets with a view to ensuring that all children could fully enjoy their rights, irrespective of the economic status of their families.

10. Iraq had established a national committee on the rights of women and children as well as a high-level interministerial committee on monitoring and reporting abuses of the rights of children, which had recently held two meetings with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The interministerial committee was also working with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and UNICEF to formulate a plan of action for ending all abuses of children's rights in conflict areas. Iraq had determined the nationalities of foreign children in liberated areas and was endeavouring to provide medical and psychological care while arranging for their repatriation.

11. Under the amended personal status law, child and early marriage was illegal in Iraq. The recruitment of children into the armed forces was also prohibited, and all new recruits must be at least 18 years of age. Iraq would continue its efforts to ensure that it complied fully with all international instruments on children's rights to which it was a party.

12. **Ms. Lodhi** (Pakistan) said that growing inequalities, spurred on by protracted conflicts, foreign occupation and cyclical spikes in violence, continued to deprive the poorest and most excluded children from receiving essential health and education services. From Syria to Palestine to India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, children living in areas affected by conflicts and foreign occupations, of neither their choosing nor making, were more at risk of targeted attacks, sexual violence, forced conscription and indiscriminate killing than at any other time in history. The special session on children, held in 2002, had been an important step towards protecting and promoting the rights of children, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or religion. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized children as agents of change in support of sustainable development.

13. Pakistan had been one of the earliest signatories to the Convention and its first two Optional Protocols. Pakistan had also ratified all International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on child labour, and a national commission for child welfare and development had been established to monitor and promote children's rights, in close collaboration with UNICEF. Legislation to establish institutions for the protection of children

from abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence had also recently been approved in the Parliament.

14. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that the protection of children, who were the most vulnerable group in society, should be a major priority for every State. It was thus regrettable that the Convention had not been universally ratified. The particular attention devoted to the promotion and protection of children by the Russian Federation was evident in its social policies, which included the State family policy, the national security strategy and the national strategy for children. In 2017, the President had decreed 2018–2027 the Decade of Childhood. The coordinating committee for the Decade of Childhood would lead efforts to enhance financial support for families with children, improve health care, increase access to quality education, promote cultural and physical education and ensure equal opportunities for children requiring special care. The Government was concerned by the growing trend among European countries of replacing the concept of a mother and father with the idea of children having a "parent 1" and "parent 2". That shift in definition of parenthood undermined historic traditional cultural and family values and caused irreparable harm to children. At its seventy-eighth session in May 2018, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had examined the initial report of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Government would take into account the resulting recommendations in the preparation of its sixth and seventh combined report under the Convention, to be submitted in 2019.

15. **Mr. Visonnavong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his Government had recently shared with the international community its progress towards implementing the Convention and its Optional Protocols during the presentation of its combined third through sixth periodic report under the Convention at the seventy-ninth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. At the regional level, his Government had contributed to institution-building and standard-setting initiatives within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), notably as a participant in the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, leading the Commission's regional study on laws, policies and practices relating to the identification, management and treatment of victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Together with fellow ASEAN member States, the Lao People's Democratic Republic also endeavoured to implement the ASEAN declarations on human rights and on the elimination on violence against children, and its anti-trafficking convention.

16. **Ms. Nguyen** Lien Huong (Viet Nam) said that her Government was particularly concerned about the prevalence of child marriage, which stunted the physical and psychological development of young girls and their children and limited their education and employment prospects. In Viet Nam, even though the minimum legal age of marriage in the country was 18 for women and 20 for men, child marriage was practiced among ethnic minorities. That was attributable to the high poverty rates and traditional customs of those communities. In 2015, the Prime Minister had put forward a ten-year plan to eradicate child marriage, which set a target to reduce the child marriage rate by 2 to 3 per cent annually. The plan focused on awareness-raising activities aimed at changing marriage practices. Fifteen provinces with the highest child marriage rates had been selected to implement a pilot programme. Activities under the plan had also been integrated into national programmes on education, gender equality, and population and family planning to ensure far-reaching effects.

17. Viet Nam was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention and had since made continuous efforts to improve the related domestic legal framework. For example, the 2016 law on children set out guiding principles to guarantee children's rights, such as the inclusion of non-discrimination and the best interests of the child in all decisions affecting children. The law also increased the number of children's rights covered and expanded the scope of application to non-Vietnamese children residing in Viet Nam. In order to ensure that policies were relevant and responsive, the Government organized a biannual children's forum, which served as an important platform to hear children's views, desires and aspirations on issues that affected them. The recommendations of the forum were then sent to relevant ministries and agencies for consideration and incorporation into policy.

18. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that children in Eritrea faced many of the challenges common to developing countries including lack of access to quality education, health care and a social safety net. As a result, in its social and economic policies, the Government aimed to promote a dignified life through equal access to national resources in all sectors of society, with a hefty investment in children. In close cooperation with national civil society organisations, parents, and community and religious leaders, the Government was implementing an action plan on children which focused on preventing child homelessness, juvenile violent crime and school dropout; and eradicating female genital mutilation, child marriage and the abandonment

of infants. The plan approached the family as a core unit that ensured the well-being of the child and set out various schemes to provide families with additional sources of income. The plan had also strengthened social protection programmes to support orphans and children with disabilities. The prevalence of female genital mutilation had been reduced from 95 per cent in 1995 to less than 10 per cent.

19. Eritrea had acceded to the ILO Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment in 1999. The Government strategy to eliminate child labour involved legislation, advocacy campaigns and development programmes, taking into account the conditions in poor rural areas. It carried out strict inspections to ensure no children under the age of 18 years engaged in occupations that jeopardized their physical, psychological, spiritual or social development. In 2015–2016, some 1500 establishments had been assessed, of which 142 had received a warning and 78 had been reported for legal action. An analysis of a labour force survey had recently been concluded, which would assist in drafting a national decent work programme. Children should not be viewed as merely vulnerable persons requiring protection; they should also be empowered to expand their creativity, express their opinion and develop their personality.

20. **Mr. Baror** (Israel) said that the rights of children should be championed to promote innovation and discovery. Israel had a long tradition of non-formal education that fostered youth leadership and reinforced children's personal growth, teamwork and political participation. That non-formal education took place through the framework of 15 afterschool youth movements, of which 30 per cent of all Israeli school students were members. The youth movements played an essential role in the country's democracy, representing the plurality of Israeli society and providing students with a space to voice their opinions freely and collectively. Youth movement members also carried out volunteer work with vulnerable populations. He reiterated the importance of non-formal education in Israel in teaching children to engage in constructive dialogue, navigate their surroundings, and nurture empathy and integrity.

21. **Mr. Belman Guerrero** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that his Government's national system for the protection of children, established through major legislation on the rights of children adopted in 2014, had produced extensive insights into the desires, needs and opportunities available to the more than 40 million children and adolescents in the country, in particular those in vulnerable situations. Mexico was also participating as a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, developing a national roadmap to eradicate violence against children, which involved all levels of Government and recognized the need for children's participation in the decisions affecting them. Furthermore, the Government was integrating international best practices into education and social welfare services to ensure they were of high quality and had a direct positive impact on children and adolescents. With regard to the draft resolution on the rights of children to be submitted to the Committee, he drew attention to the need to ensure respect for the rights of migrant and indigenous children.

22. **Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia) said that the promotion and protection of the rights of children was a key priority of the Government of Mongolia. It had developed a 2016–2021 programme of action which reflected its Sustainable Development Vision 2030, the national plan to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into policy. Major legislation affecting children had entered into force since 2016, including laws to provide assistance to single parents, foster youth development and establish childcare service centres to support working women. Furthermore, in 2017, a five-year national programme on child development and protection had been launched and the national human rights commission had presented its annual report, resulting in the adoption by the Parliament of a resolution to improve school conditions for ethnic minorities and children with disabilities and promote gender equality through better implementation of legislation. The Government had set a goal to address by 2030 the challenges relating to the promotion and protection of children's rights faced by its capital city, Ulaanbaatar, including a shortage of kindergartens, the overcrowding of family hospitals and the harmful health impacts of air pollution. In that regard, implementation of existing legislation and strategies remained the prevailing challenge.

23. **Mr. Tripathi** (India) said that India was home to 472 million children under the age of 18, comprising nearly one fifth of all children in the world. The Constitution had extensive provisions to promote the rights of children and support their development and welfare. The national policy for children, grounded in a rights-based approach, focused on survival, health and nutrition; education and development; protection; and participation. Periodic review of all policies on children's rights was undertaken by a national commission for the protection of children.

24. Modern technology was being used to improve the scope and efficiency of the universal immunization programme, while a range of programmes aimed to

safeguard the physical and psychological health of adolescents, with special attention devoted to girls. In the area of education, the Constitution provided for free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14. A meal scheme in schools aimed to foster the universal enrolment and retention of children, while private schools reserved 25 per cent of seats for children from low-income sectors. To address the imbalance in the child sex ratio, a programme had been introduced to conduct public education campaigns, closely monitor sex-selective abortions and encourage the education of girls. A robust legal framework provided for the protection of children from sexual assault, sexual harassment, pornography and trafficking. Government agencies and civil society worked together to implement relevant legal provisions to safeguard the rights of children and juveniles alleged to be in conflict with the law, as well as those in need of care and protection.

25. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that protecting children from violence resulting from conflict, poverty and a lack of adequate child-sensitive policies was essential to the achievement of peace and just societies, as recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, international and regional partnerships that brought together Governments, civil society and the private sector were crucial. In Brazil, a legislative framework for the protection of children had been adopted in 2012. It safeguarded the rights of child victims and witnesses of violence; the right to be raised free from corporal punishment and other degrading or cruel treatment; and provided for the prevention and suppression of trafficking in persons, especially children, and the protection of migrant children.

26. Concerning migrant children, he underscored his Government's support for measures that prohibited collective expulsions, ended child detentions and prevented arbitrary arrests. A child's interests should be given high priority and not be just one of many considerations, given that every child had the right to have his or her best interests be a primary consideration in any action concerning them. All migration laws, policies and practices should be individually assessed in order to take into account children's best interests.

27. Brazil had been an active participant in the global discussions on combating child labour. Between 1992 and 2015, the number of children and adolescents working in Brazil had decreased by 80 per cent. The Government maintained a special focus on reducing the burden on girls to carry out unpaid domestic and care work, which affected their education and employment prospects. The Government valued the participation and contribution of children, particularly those in vulnerable situations, to the planning of policies, including programmes focused on development and the empowerment of girls. Data to ensure the success of gender-responsive and child-sensitive policies was critical.

28. **Mr. Gonzalez** (Colombia) said that his Government had launched a 2018–2030 national policy on children and adolescents which aimed to support their comprehensive development; foster conditions that ensured their well-being and equal access to opportunities; and support their participation in the transformation of the country. At same time, a policy seeking to strengthen the capacities of families while recognizing them as holders of collective rights and agents of social change had been established. In 2017, Colombia's primary institution responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights of children and families had adopted a differentiated rights approach in order take into account gender, disability, ethnic identity, and sexual and gender orientation in all its activities. His Government considered investment in children under the age of six to be particularly vital, given the critical physical and psychological developments that took place in the first six years of life, and the resulting positive social impact of such investment. In that regard, a law on early childhood, adopted in 2016, set out State policy on comprehensive early childhood development which aimed to facilitate access to appropriate human, social and material conditions.

29. While there had been progress in terms of reducing the number of children in situations of armed conflict, the Government continued efforts to eradicate the recruitment of children. It remained steadfast in its commitment to prevent children from being used in situations of conflict and devote special attention to indigenous children, children of African descent and those living in marginalized areas. Bullying and cyberbullying should be addressed using a comprehensive and inclusive approach that contributed to the elimination of discrimination based on gender, disability and ethnicity. Lastly, statistical systems should be strengthened given their vital role in the formulation of policy.

30. **Mr. Gutiérrez Segú Berdullas** (Spain) said that his Government remained firmly committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention and its three Optional Protocols. Furthermore, its international cooperation policy on development included specific funding and activities related to the promotion of children's rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had considered Spain's combined fifth and sixth periodic reports at its seventy-seventh session held in

2018. The Government was taking into consideration the Committee's concluding observations in its current policy development process, including a draft bill on the comprehensive protection of children from violence, which sought to strengthen the relevant public institutions, and the third national strategic plan on childhood 2019–2022, which provided for children's participation in public life and attention to vulnerable groups. Spain had conducted a voluntary national review, which included the protection of children's rights, within the framework of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In 2019, Spain would host the Third International Conference on Safe Schools, a discussion which would be guided by the framework of the Safe Schools Declaration. The protection of children in situations of armed conflict was a priority of the Government, which emphasized the need for a gender perspective and the protection of education in initiatives addressing the issue.

31. **Ms. Turner** (Jamaica) said that her Government continued to work to fulfil Sustainable Development Goal 16, Target 2, on the elimination of all forms of violence against children. In that regard, it had participated in the first 2030 Agenda for Children: End Violence Solutions Summit held in February 2018 and had remained strongly engaged in the work of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, acting as one of the pathfinding countries since July 2016. The Government had also adopted a 2018 amendment to the law on child care and protection and finalised the national action plan for an integrated response to children and violence and a related roadmap. Jamaica had developed an anti-bullying response framework and had contributed to the Secretary General's report on Protecting Children from Bullying (A/73/265). The Government had recently merged two child protection entities in order to create a single child protection and family services agency. The merger aimed to improve efficiency in the use of resources and the timeliness of service delivery and increase the number of staff in field services.

32. In December 2018, Jamaica would host the regional Caribbean conference of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, welcoming partners from both the Caribbean and other regions. As the co-chair of the Group of Friends on Children and the Sustainable Development Goals, her delegation emphasized the need for greater opportunities to exchange views, experiences and best practices among Member States, and the importance of partnerships. In that regard, in May 2018, Governments of Jamaica and the United States of America had signed a Child Protection Compact Partnership aimed at reducing child trafficking. In June 2018, the Country-Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labour project had been launched with the support of Winrock International and Lawyers without Borders.

33. **Ms. Ruminowicz** (Poland) said that the text of the Convention had been profoundly influenced by the concept of children's essential humanity pioneered by the Polish writer Janusz Korczak. Indeed, Poland had been one of the States driving the creation of the Convention. Its current efforts to implement the Convention focused on the prevention of all forms of violence against children. At the national level, Poland had a solid legal framework on the protection children's rights, implemented in part through the children's ombudsman office, which operated as an independent State body and in line with its Constitution and the Convention. Corporal punishment had been prohibited since 2010. In 2016, the Government had launched a programme to provide financial support to families with children. Migrant children were treated with special care and in accordance with Poland's commitments under international law, including the Convention. Under Polish law, unaccompanied migrants were offered legal representation, decent living conditions and social assistance. Nevertheless, the Government recognized that the most important action in respect of migrant children was to support family reunification and took all necessary measures to that end.

34. Efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must include children's perspectives, given that they were often the group most affected by poverty, homelessness, violence, neglect and unequal access to education. Such implementation should also leverage the linkages between the rights of children as defined by existing legal instruments and the Sustainable Development Goals.

35. **Mr. Molina Linares** (Guatemala) said that by striving to provide children with adequate health and education services and guarantee their protection from violence, exploitation and discrimination, Member States could not only prevent the projected 70 million deaths of children under the age of 5 by the year 2030, but also contribute to sustainable development and reduce the costs associated with ill health and low productivity.

36. Given its geographic location in the path of migration flows heading north and its economic and institutional challenges, like other countries in the region, Guatemala was highly vulnerable to the problem of trafficking in persons. As migration flows had intensified in recent years, Guatemala had become an origin, transit and destination country for international

trafficking, which had led to the spread of that criminal practice at the national level. Of particular concern was the scourge of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, which especially affected women, children and adolescents. Physical and psychological trauma, sexually-transmitted diseases, chronic malnutrition, social isolation, drug addiction, and even suicide or death at the hands of traffickers or their clients were among the devastating effects of that crime. Trafficking was a form of modern slavery and the international community must remain resolute in its joint efforts to eradicate it.

37. Guatemala's national development plan included specific initiatives to support children's development and create opportunities for them to grow up free from violence and able to fully exercise their rights, as envisioned by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Government had submitted its fifth and sixth combined report under the Convention to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2018.

38. **Mr. Issetov** (Kazakhstan) said that his Government considered the security and safety of children to be a primary requisite for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new agenda for peace. That was evident in its national plan, Kazakhstan 2050, and other policies. A committee for the protection of children's rights had been constituted under the Ministry of Education with the aim of ensuring children's social rights and legal guarantees. That initiative was implemented in all regions of the country, with a focus on children's moral and spiritual development and access to well-qualified child welfare experts. Forward-looking legislation had been adopted since Kazakhstan had acceded to the Convention in 1994. New laws provided for shelters for homeless youth, with provisions for guardianship and adoption; support for children with disabilities; the prevention of crime, neglect and homelessness among children; and the prevention of child labour, in accordance with ILO provisions. Efforts were also underway to combat the abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children.

39. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had recognized the strides made by Kazakhstan in respect of its legislation, services and programmes, and its cooperation with international organizations and civil society. The Government had established an ombudsman for children and ensured their participation in all matters concerning them. Despite the downward-turning global economic trends, Kazakhstan had continued to provide the same and sometimes even an increased level of social support and protection. Measurement of Millennium Development Goal targets had confirmed that the country's infant and maternal mortality rates had decreased, in part through improved nutrition and immunization campaigns. The Government emphasized recreation, sports and culture to ensure the holistic development of youth.

40. Kazakhstan collaborated closely with UNICEF with a view to providing leadership and serving as a partner to other Central Asian countries through its proposed United Nations regional centre, which would focus on sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and building resilience, with children's rights as a priority. Kazakhstan also provided humanitarian assistance to children during disasters and natural catastrophes through its national development agency.

41. **Ms. Hasan** (Indonesia) said that the provision of timely vaccinations and proper nutrition were some of the most important interventions for saving children's lives. Such activities had been facilitated around the world thanks to international cooperation. Her Government was deeply committed to creating an environment that allowed children to thrive and contribute to society. In that regard, democracy, the principle of unity in diversity and the spirit of mutual cooperation were key elements. The Government continued to reduce the poverty level and to support poor families, including through the national health insurance system. The goal of achieving a zero stunting rate was a major priority. A national programme to reduce stunting was active in 100 districts and 1,000 villages. Twenty million children living in poverty were attending school owing to a Government subsidy programme for children 6 to 21 years of age. Indonesia was also a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

42. **Mr. Zambrano Ortiz** (Ecuador) said that Goals 4, 5 and 16, relating to, respectively, quality education, gender equality, and the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies, could only be achieved when all States comprehensively protected children. People under the age of 18 comprised 36 per cent of Ecuador's population. The Constitution therefore recognized children as a priority group and designated the State as responsible for protecting them and ensuring their holistic development and the full exercise of their rights while taking into consideration the principle of the child's best interest and its precedence over the interests of others. The Constitution also provided for children's right to physical and psychological integrity; to an identity, name and citizenship; to comprehensive health and nutrition; education and culture, sports, and recreation; social security; to have a family and enjoy peaceful coexistence with family and community; to social participation; and to respect for their freedom and dignity. Efforts to achieve equity for children included a

programme based on a model of joint responsibility, focused on early childhood.

43. Recalling that the international community was on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention and the tenth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, he reaffirmed his Government's commitment to strengthening and guaranteeing respect for children's rights. He called for a focus on Goal 3, Target 2, to end the preventable deaths of children under 5, and Goal 4, Target 1, on the provision of quality primary and secondary education.

44. **Ms. Shange-Buthane** (South Africa) said that, since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, her Government had taken a deliberate policy decision to give the highest priority to the protection of the rights of the child, in particular those of the girl child and children with disabilities. In that regard, the Government was drafting the third amendment to the children's act; revising the 2019–2024 national plan of action for children; drafting a new child participation framework; and finalising consultations concerning the 2019–2024 programme of action addressing violence against women and children, focusing on prevention, protection and support services. South Africa would submit its response to the list of issues received from the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and would report to that Committee in November 2018. It had also provided its first draft response to the Independent Expert for the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of their Liberty. All of those policies, laws and submissions were aimed at supporting South Africa's implementation of the Convention and other international and regional obligations. The Government had taken a consultative, inclusive and transparent multi-stakeholder approach to the various review processes to ensure collective responsibility and ownership over them.

45. Most of South Africa's historically disadvantaged children remained socially excluded. As the divide between rich and poor continued to grow, children from the poorest households faced poverty, inadequate nutrition, poor quality education and limited prospects to access tertiary education. In response, the Government had introduced free higher education and training for disadvantaged students. Children in low-income communities were also affected by substance abuse. Her Government thus requested that future United Nations reports on children's rights elaborate on the problem of substance abuse and provide guidance and best practices on how communities and families could be equipped to deal with that scourge and its impact on children.

46. With regard to the continued practice of child labour, her Government wished to draw attention to the concerns raised by Alliance 8.7, a global partnership that aimed to eradicate modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour. Those concerns encapsulated its reasons for pursuing the elaboration of a legally binding instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises and hold them accountable for violations against children, which in many cases were taking place with impunity.

47. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that the protection of the rights of children was one of the foremost priorities of Georgia. In order to ensure coherent policy and effective coordination among State institutions, in December 2016 the Government had established an inter-agency commission responsible for implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocols. Georgia was a member of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, participating as a pathfinding country. A juvenile justice code had entered into force in 2016, and several laws had been adopted to ensure provision of identification documents to children living in the streets, thereby facilitating their access to public services. Since 2017, the Parliament had been drafting a code on children's rights, which, once adopted, would bridge the gaps in existing legislation and contribute to the effective implementation of the State's human rights obligations, including those enshrined in the Convention.

48. The deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia was a matter of concern, in particular the situation of children facing violence and discrimination by the occupying regime on a daily basis. Given the absence of international monitoring mechanisms within those territories, children were deprived of their right to education in their native language and the right to freedom of movement. Since 2015, the occupying regime in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali had been closing Georgian schools or changing the language of instruction into Russian, which had had negative effects on the academic performance of schoolchildren in the districts of Gali and Akhalgori. That linguistic discrimination constituted yet another attack against the identity and dignity of the ethnic Georgian population in the occupied regions. Moreover, the closing of so-called crossing points along the occupation line had further restricted freedom of movement and worsened the humanitarian situation on the ground, in particular for children, who were prevented from crossing the

occupation line to attend school in Georgian-controlled territory. For its part, the Government of Georgia had launched a new peace initiative, "A Step to a Better Future", which aimed to facilitate access to all levels of education for residents of the conflict-affected Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions in Georgian-controlled territory. The international community must ensure that its efforts to realize the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development did not leave behind children in conflict-affected areas.

49. **Ms. Fareena** (Maldives) said that her Government had established specialized units within mainstream schools across the country to ensure equal opportunities for schooling for children with disabilities. Furthermore, persons with disabilities, including children, received financial and other forms of assistance, including equipment and housing. Regarding the protection of the right to health, the infant mortality rate in the country had been reduced from 121 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1977 to just 6 in 2016, while vaccine-preventable diseases were non-existent.

50. Concerning child protection structures, family and children service centres were maintained in all of the country's 19 atolls. Those centres had child-friendly interview rooms and temporary shelters for women and child victims of domestic abuse. A registry of convicted child sex offenders was also published online. Seeking to provide multiple avenues to report instances of violence and to streamline that process, the Government had established 24-hour, toll-free call centre and launched a mobile application that allowed anyone, children included, to report cases anonymously. Schools aimed to foster a culture of respect and tolerance with the aim of shaping global citizens and preventing bullying. Specific programmes to empower the girl child focused on encouraging and motivating girls to achieve their goals and become decision-makers. An initiative to improve coordination among various Government agencies and thereby enhance child protection had produced a national child protection database, which strengthened the referral mechanisms between the Ministry of Gender and Family and the Maldives police service and generated real-time, disaggregated and evidence-based data. Further, the Ministry of Education oversaw a policy information system, whereby school attendance was monitored to identify and follow up on possible cases of concern.

51. **Mr. Mohd Nasir** (Malaysia) said that massive urbanization in Malaysia had created economically and socially disadvantaged urban zones. Children in such areas often lacked access to health care and education, were vulnerable to exploitation and had limited prospects. The Government therefore devoted its utmost attention to children's access to education, with the goals of increasing school enrolment and completion rates. The Ministry of Education provided free textbooks to all students and had established a trust fund for poor students and a supplementary food programme. The Government also implemented various strategies to facilitate access to education for indigenous children, students with special needs, young prisoners, juvenile offenders, and undocumented children. In 2017, the national rate of completion of primary school was 98 per cent, while secondary school completion rate was 91 per cent. Malaysia had also achieved gender parity in enrolment. The Government would continue to strive to ensure universal access and full enrolment for all children from preschool to the upper secondary school level by 2020.

52. Domestic legislation had been introduced to protect children from child labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking. That included a law on youth employment, a law to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, and a law on sexual offences against children. Malaysia was a party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Convention had influenced national efforts to reduce infant and child mortality, accelerate girls' education, and increase access to education for children living in remote areas.

53. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that her Government had taken major steps in recent years to improve the legal and institutional framework to protect the rights of children and improve their living conditions. Children were among the groups afforded special protection by constitutional amendments adopted in 2010. Ensuring education opportunities for all children and closing the gender gap in all spheres of life for the girl child remained central priorities.

54. At the international level, Turkey was a party to the Convention and its first two Optional Protocols and had signed the third Optional Protocol concerning a communications procedure in 2012. It had also ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Council of Europe Convention on Contact concerning Children. The rights and well-being of children in situations of conflict and crisis needed to be considered. Unfortunately, the challenges to doing so had been intensified by violations such as the recruitment and use of children, mass abductions, torture and sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the prevention of humanitarian access, which had become patterns of conflict. The international

community must display joint and robust political determination and action to address that situation.

55. The large movement of millions of migrants and refugees across borders was a major humanitarian crisis and required the international community to redouble its efforts to address the needs of displaced children. Turkey hosted more refugees than any other country, and in that regard, had shared its experience in strengthening the resilience and well-being of more than one million Syrian children in the country. Syrian children were enrolled in Turkey's public schools and in 318 temporary education centres dedicated specifically to them. The Government addressed all of their material needs and provided cash assistance for every Syrian child attending school as well as conditional education assistance based on school attendance. Those efforts had helped increase the schooling ratio, with enrolment reaching 65 per cent in the 2017–2018 school year. However, the establishment of new schools and employment of new teachers was urgently needed, particularly given that Syrian children would be the ones to rebuild their country. In that regard, she called on the international community to act in conformity with the principle of joint responsibility and burden-sharing.

56. **Ms. Salim** (Afghanistan) said that the violence imposed on Afghanistan had had a devastating effect on its people, in particular children. Proxy forces from abroad had sought to sow discord within Afghan society, inflicting severe trauma on its children. A recent attack on an educational centre Kabul illustrated the types of atrocities committed by those forces. Terrorists were exploiting children by abducting and brainwashing them outside of Afghanistan to carry out suicide attacks. In 2017 alone, 3,179 children had been killed or maimed as a result of the war. The Government nevertheless remained committed to protecting the rights of children. Recent initiatives included the adoption of a child protection policy by the Ministry of Defence; the establishment of a secretariat for children within the Ministry of Labour; the amendment of the law on trafficking in persons; the development of a strategy and action plan to eliminate child labour; and the amendment of legislation in order to facilitate the issuance of identification cards to children whose parents were unknown.

57. According to UNICEF, 75 per cent of the 3.5 million children out of school in the country were girls, a disparity that was exacerbated by limited access to services in rural areas. To support the empowerment of girls, the Government had raised the legal age of marriage to 18, resulting in 10 per cent decline in child marriages. Eleven schools had been created for children with disabilities across the country, while the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation had enabled more than two million internally displaced children to return to school.

58. In the course of a decade the infant mortality rate had declined from 25.7 per cent to 2.2 per cent, and the number of births assisted by health professionals had risen from 20 per cent to 40 per cent. The Ministry of Public Health had recently established 924 malnutrition treatment centres across the country, which had thus far provided treatment to 162,000 children suffering from severe malnutrition. The Government was also dedicated to implementing a comprehensive plan to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers and enable juvenile offenders to reintegrate into society. It would also continue to enforce the new penal code that criminalized the sexual abuse of children and increase the number of the child protection units within the national police centres.

59. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic) said that the ratification of the Convention in 1991 had helped the Dominican Republic build a system for the protection and promotion of children's rights. Internationally, despite great progress made under the Convention, mechanisms to ensure accountability for the violation of children's rights were needed, as were concrete policies to ensure children's access to education, protection from armed conflict and the opportunity to develop without discrimination. In that regard, the Dominican Republic had a policy framework that supported and integrated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

60. The Government devoted particular attention to early childhood programmes. Since 2015, nearly 130,000 children under the age of 5 had attended Government day-care facilities, while a centre dedicated to children with disabilities provided diagnostic and rehabilitation services. In 2017 the legislature had passed a law to prohibit child marriage and set the minimum legal marriage age at 18. The President had proclaimed 11 October as the National Day of the Girl Child, recognizing the critical role the empowerment of and investment in girls played in the achievement of sustainable development. The Government was working with UNICEF on a project to establish community roundtables to address the issue of the commercial sexual exploitation of children. It had also re-launched a campaign to promote the reporting of that crime and had joined the WePROTECT Global Alliance to end child sexual exploitation online. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children had supported the drafting of a national roadmap to prevent and eliminate violence against children. That process had also involved civil society and youth, and its implementation foresaw the participation of affected groups, in particular the most

vulnerable. The roadmap included a national campaign to provide families and communities with tools to use positive discipline techniques and thus reduce violence against children. Lastly, the national council on children and adolescents was coordinating a census with the aim of protecting the 10,000 children living in the streets.

61. **Ms. Al-Mawlawi** (Qatar) said that the annual report of the Special Representative on Violence against Children (A/73/276) made clear that considerable progress had been achieved by the international community in its efforts to protect children from violence. Further efforts were needed, however, in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16, target 2, and ensure that all children grew up free from violence, abuse and exploitation. Qatar continued to provide support to a number of United Nations agencies working to combat violence against children, and had recently concluded an agreement with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed conflict that had provided for the establishment in Doha of a United Nations centre on children in armed conflict, which would facilitate efforts to address the plight of children in conflict situations throughout the region.

62. In line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the new national development strategy, Qatar had enacted numerous legislative and executive measures to advance and protect the rights of children and remained committed to upholding its commitments pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto. Qatar had sought to put in place early warning mechanisms to help ensure that any cases of child abuse or neglect were promptly brought to the attention of the authorities. To that end, Qatar had increased the number of social workers assigned to schools, who were trained to identify suspected cases of child abuse or neglect, and had held awareness-raising campaigns in schools to teach students how they could protect themselves from violence. Qatar had also established a 24-hour telephone hotline for reporting any suspected cases of child mistreatment, provided all children subjected to abuse or mistreatment with appropriate health-care and rehabilitation services, and sought to ensure that all child victims of violence or abuse were placed in secure and safe home environments. The Government was also working with relevant civil society organizations to combat bullying in schools.

63. Qatar was convinced that education was the key to development and was working with its international partners to ensure that all children, including those in emergency situations, enjoyed their right to a high-quality education. Qatar had provided substantial support to the Education Above All initiative, which aimed to uphold children's right to education in crisis- and conflict-stricken regions, and had recently provided a grant of $70 million to UNICEF to facilitate its efforts to provide clean drinking water in Yemen and combat the spread of cholera and other water-borne diseases, which could save the lives of millions of children.

64. **Mr. Charters** (Observer for the Holy See) said that his delegation attributed particular significance to the recognition in the Convention of the irreplaceable role of the family in fostering the growth and well-being of its members. The family was the first and vital cell of society because of its service to life, its unique role in the education of its members and its part in developing a sound social fabric. Parents had the primary responsibility to protect and nurture children in all phases of their growth. The well-being of children therefore depended on State measures to support families in fulfilling their life-giving and formative functions. At the same time, States should play a subsidiary role because integral human development and the exercise of human dignity could not be imposed; they must be allowed to unfold for each individual in communion with others.

65. The report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention (A/73/272) showed that child mortality remained unacceptably high, with 5.6 million children dying in 2016, mostly of preventable causes. Women and children should therefore be more adequately supported through the provision of quality maternal and child healthcare and integrated family-based services. States also had a duty to promote a culture that allowed children to exercise the right to education and discover their role and responsibilities within their family and community. That was not possible without the recognition of the inalienable right of parents to educate their children according to their religious and cultural values, especially in areas where the dignity of the person was at stake. No effort must be spared to create a culture that protected the young and vulnerable. Migrant children in particular should not be forgotten, as they were often voiceless, deprived of documentation and vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

66. **Mr. Zulu** (Zambia) said that his Government had recently adopted a revised Constitution, which provided for the comprehensive protection of children. It had also adopted a national policy on children, which aimed to reduce child malnutrition and expand early childhood care programmes throughout the country. A bill integrating the provisions of the Convention and of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child had been drafted and measures had been taken to strengthen the child protection system in the country,

including through family support services. Efforts to improve education included the construction and renovation of education facilities, the provision of materials and equipment, and the recruitment of teachers. Addressing gender-based violence in schools was a major priority, as unsafe school environments discouraged enrolment and led to increased rates of school dropout.

67. Noting that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized the importance of ending harmful practices against children, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, he said that the Government was in the process of standardizing the legal age of marriage and had begun a countrywide consultative process with a view to criminalizing child marriage in Zambia in order to ensure that any laws prohibiting the practice would actually be respected by the affected communities. The Government was also in the process of implementing the national strategy on ending child marriage, which aimed to reduce the number of child marriages by 40 per cent by 2021. In that regard, it continued to work with traditional leaders in order to educate them about the harmful effects of child marriage and teenage pregnancies. Continued investments in the health sector had yielded progress in the treatment and prevention of HIV and AIDS. The Government had provided treatment for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission to 89 per cent of affected mothers.

68. **Ms. Feldman** (Australia) said that the best interests of the child were a primary consideration in Australia's policy, administrative and legal decisions, and institutions. Legislation and case law in all jurisdictions concerning child protection, criminal justice, family law and health recognized its importance. The Government's policy objectives included closing the education gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians; improving access to education for children with disabilities; and preventing cervical cancer through free and voluntary human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination for both girls and boys. The Government was also committed to empowering women, protecting girls from forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and stopping human trafficking in Australia and abroad.

69. Measures to protect children from abuse, harassment and bullying included the implementation of national policies to guide the development of safety and well-being practices in schools. The Government worked with state and territorial authorities to prevent child abuse and neglect and improve outcomes for children in out-of-home care systems. There was also a commissioner on children working within the Australian Human Rights Commission. In 2017, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its final report. The Government had already undertaken a number of actions to ensure children in institutional care were safe. They included reforming screening and oversight mechanisms for people working in the sector, developing child safety standards and establishing the national office for child safety. In 2010, Australia had launched a national redress scheme which was developed between all levels of government and non-governmental organizations to help victims of institutional child sexual abuse gain access to counselling, psychological care services, and monetary payments.

70. **Ms. Huilan Zhu** (China) said that the international community should uphold the principles of peaceful settlement of international disputes and create stable international and regional environments in order to protect children from war and turmoil. Her Government called on Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eliminate child poverty by promoting the economic development of developing countries, improving health-care services for children and respecting every child's right to education.

71. The advent of the Internet had facilitated the dissemination of information, enabling vulnerable children, such as girls and children with disabilities, to acquire knowledge and understand the world. On the other hand, Internet addiction, harmful information online and the proliferation of child pornography had resulted in both physical and psychological harm done to children. Sovereign States therefore had both the right and the responsibility to increase monitoring of the Internet and effectively prevent and combat the abuse of technology and the violation of children's rights.

72. China was home to one fifth of the world's children and the Government had long been committed to the promotion and protection of their rights. China was a State party to the Convention and its first two Optional Protocols, the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. The Government attached great importance to strengthening monitoring of the Internet and had taken legislative and enforcement measures to fight cybercrimes to protect children from harmful online content.

73. **Ms. Ellertsdottir** (Iceland) said that her Government was concerned about the growing number of children living in regions where political violence and

armed conflict were a common occurrence. During its tenure on the Human Rights Council, Iceland had pledged to continue to support initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against children, in particular efforts aimed at eliminating sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage. Addressing those practices required comprehensive strategies to empower girls; work with boys and men, families, and community leaders to change social norms; improved access to quality education and health services; and the implementation legal and policy frameworks. Iceland would continue to support UNICEF and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) programmes to accelerate actions to end child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

74. Perpetrators of crimes involving abuse and violence against children must always be held accountable without regard to their position or social status. Given the devastating consequences of traumatic experiences on the mental and physical health of children, preventing such events or mitigating their effects required early detection and appropriate interventions using evidence-based procedures aimed at enhancing protective measures. Iceland therefore promoted multi-agency and child-friendly approaches to child protective services. In Iceland, the Children's House brought together child protection services, medical professionals, law enforcement, prosecutors and judges to investigate cases of suspected sexual abuse and other violence against children. Since its establishment in [illegible], the Children's House had inspired a similar approach in nearly 20 countries in Europe and had made the justice system in Iceland more accessible and effective for children. The Government placed great emphasis on the role played by the education system in empowering and preparing young people for participation in society. Free and universal education was crucial to social equality, economic growth and long-term prosperity. In that regard, Sustainable Development Goal 4, Target 1, called for all girls and boys to have access to inclusive and equitable quality education by 2030.

75. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that Namibia's national law on child care and protection was in line with international and regional agreements and set out mandates to prevent and respond to the neglect, abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children. Children across the economic spectrum in Namibia faced a number of challenges, including bullying, the effects of which were particularly harsh on marginalized groups, such as children living with HIV and AIDS, and children with disabilities. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (A/73/276) recognized Namibia's efforts to enact legislation to protect children from violence.

76. A national framework that provided guiding principles for building safe and supportive school communities, centred on the well-being of students and educators, had been launched in September 2018. Namibia had also introduced free primary and secondary education to empower the girl child and ultimately put an end to the cycle of female poverty in the country. Although the education sector had a robust legislative framework and received the largest share of the national budget, it still faced a shortage of well-trained teachers; limited teaching and learning materials and playground equipment; overcrowded classrooms; and limited access to sanitation services, electricity, and technology, including Internet connections. In the area of health, teenage pregnancy was prevalent, while one in five new HIV infections occurred among adolescents, with girls accounting for two-thirds of those infections. In that regard, in addition to HIV prevention programmes, the Government had created formal support systems, including teen clubs, to provide a safe place for children living with HIV and AIDS to cope with the social and medical dimensions of their condition.

77. **Ms. Bang** Cho Eu (Republic of Korea) said that the promotion and protection of children's rights must include access to inclusive and equitable education as a top priority. In that regard, global citizenship education aimed to nurture citizens that would act upon the core values of understanding and respect for diversity, tolerance and human rights. As a staunch advocate of global citizenship education, the Republic of Korea, together with Qatar, had launched the Group of Friends for Global Citizenship Education in 2017. The Korean Government also supported the UNICEF "Generation Unlimited" initiative, which aimed to ensure that every young person would be engaged in education, learning, training or employment by 2030, and would improve education opportunities for children.

78. Long-awaited gender equality could only be achieved through the empowerment of girls, who were more susceptible to violence and discrimination and had lower school attendance rates. Particular focus should also be given to children with disabilities to ensure their full access to necessary social and educational services. The Republic of Korea eagerly supported global efforts to enhance the rights of children in a more inclusive manner. As a member of the Group of Friends on Children and the Sustainable Development Goals and the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict,

the Korean Government had been a reliable partner in promoting and protecting the rights of the children.

79. **Mr.** Tun Lin **Swai** (Myanmar) said that his Government had placed the comprehensive development of children at the core of its national development agenda, which also supported the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Constitution of Myanmar guaranteed access to free and compulsory primary school education. In recent years, the Government had increased public spending on education and had subsidized the enrolment of secondary school students, resulting in a reduction in the school drop-out rate.

80. The Government had made peace and national reconciliation the highest priority in the national agenda. At the third session of the 21st-Century Panglong Conference, held in July 2018, an important agreement was reached by all parties to set up programmes to guarantee children's rights, abide by the Convention and eliminate the six grave violations against children as part of a commitment to mainstream child protection and prevention of violations into the peace process.

81. Since Myanmar had signed the Joint Action Plan with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in June 2012, it had made significant progress to prevent and eliminate violations and abuses against children. More than 900 former underaged recruits had been released and reintegrated into communities and legal actions had been taken against those responsible for child recruitments. Significantly, there had been no reports of new child recruitments in 2018. The Government was working closely with the Office of the Special Representative for early completion of the Joint Action Plan.

82. Myanmar had ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement on children in armed conflict and the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and was in the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. After becoming a party to the Convention, Myanmar had enacted the national law on children in 1993. The Parliament was in the final stage of adopting a revision of that law which was in conformity with prevailing international norms and included provisions on the prevention of all forms of violence against children. Myanmar had signed the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups in February 2017 and had signed a memorandum of understanding with the ILO in September 2018 to implement a national 2018-2021 decent work programme, which included the development and implementation of an action plan on child labour.

83. **Mr. Markar** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that children comprised approximately 30 per cent of his country's population. Sri Lanka was one of the early signatories to the Convention its Optional Protocols and the two ILO Convention on child labour and the Government took those obligations seriously. The Constitution guaranteed equality to all citizens and included special provisions for the advancement of children, women and disabled persons, recognizing the need for affirmative action on behalf of vulnerable communities. Children in Sri Lanka were protected by a network that began with the family and included a widespread, accessible health care system and a free education system from the primary to the university level. The Government also offered students free health care, meals, textbooks, uniforms and books.

84. He emphasized the importance of providing children with opportunities to exercise the freedom of expression and access appropriate information. Access to leisure and recreation was often denied in modern families where there was an overemphasis on academic performance. Children should be encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes that affected their lives with accurate information and care. The impact of new and evolving issues, such as the spread of fake news, hate speech and misinformation across social media, on the day-to-day lives of children should be considered.

85. **Ms Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that her Government believed strongly that the family was the primary protector of children, as a family environment with a mother and father was needed to produce a physically and psychologically healthy child. Governments must therefore provide assistance to families and must ensure that the education of the child was directed to the development of respect for the child's parents, as well as the child's own cultural identity, language and values, as indeed was called for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Her Government also believed that, to promote children's welfare, it was essential to develop their talents and mental and physical capacities.

86. Egypt had launched a national strategy to combat child and early marriages, which were key drivers of poverty among Egyptian families and accounted for up to 15 per cent of marriages in towns and cities and as many as 30 per cent of marriages in rural areas. Egypt had also witnessed a significant upsurge in bullying among children, which the Ministry of Education

believed had been driven, at least in part, by globalization and changes to social mores. In response, the Ministry had recently launched a major public awareness-raising campaign in cooperation with UNICEF to combat bullying both within and outside schools. Egypt was also working with UNICEF and the European Union to draw up a strategic framework on violence against children that would place particular emphasis on combating domestic violence, creating safe and nurturing school environments and raising awareness of the dangers posed by social media platforms and the Internet.

87. The President of Egypt had declared 2019 as the National Year of Education. In preparation, the Government was formulating a new comprehensive strategy on primary and secondary education that would focus, inter alia, on improving early childhood education, enhancing teacher training, and adopting innovative evaluation and follow up mechanisms with a view to strengthening education outcomes. She underscored her country's firm determination to uphold the Convention of the Rights of the Child and all other international instruments on the rights of children to which it was a party in line with its strong cultural and religious values.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.